

who held high social status and of those who stepped on the head of Śākyamuni Buddha . . . ” Needless to say, the sin of those who despise one who wears a surplice is very grave.

## 2

### *On Renouncing the World to Practice Good at the Sight of the Adultery of Crows<sup>1</sup>*

Dhyāna Master Shingon 信嚴 was Chinu no agatanushi Yamatomaro 血沼縣主倭麻呂,<sup>2</sup> governor of Izumi district, Izumi province 和泉國泉郡,<sup>3</sup> in the reign of Emperor Shōmu. By the gate of his house there stood a big tree in which two crows built a nest, hatched eggs, and sheltered their chicks under their wings. The male crow flew here and there to bring food for his mate who sheltered the chicks. Once when he left the nest for food, another crow flew into the nest and began to flirt. Attracted by the newcomer, the female crow flew high up into the sky toward the north, abandoning her chicks in the nest. When the male crow came back with food in his mouth and could not find his wife, he watched over the chicks affectionately and did not look for food for many days.

The governor noticed this and had someone climb the tree in order to see the nest. The crow and the chicks were dead. Realizing the female crow's adultery, the governor was overcome with pity and his mind was filled with mercy. He renounced the world, leaving his home, family, and rank, and followed the Most Venerable Gyōgi 行基<sup>4</sup> to practice good and seek the path. He was named Shingon. His wife was also of the Chinu no agatanushi. After her husband left her, she remained faithful to him without bitterness. When her dear son contracted a fatal disease and was dying, he said to her, "It will prolong my life if I drink my mother's milk." The mother gave her breast to her son as he had asked. Sucking the breast, he lamented, saying, "I am abandoning the sweet milk of my mother and dying!" and breathed his last. Sorrowing for her deceased son, she renounced

1. Cf. *Shūchū-shō* (VIII).

2. The Chinu family was of the local gentry, native to Japan, according to the *Shinsen shōji-roku*.

3. Present Sennan- and Senboku-gun, Ōsaka-fu 大阪府泉南, 泉北郡.

4. See Chap. I(1)d, II(2)c, etc.

the world as her husband had done and devoted herself to learning and practicing good dharma.<sup>5</sup>

Dhyāna Master Shingon, however, had little luck and, after short association with the Most Venerable Gyōgi, preceded Gyōgi to the grave. Wailing, the master composed the following poem:

Did you not promise me we would die together?

But, alas! You are gone,

Leaving me behind.

Are you a crow, to be such a great liar?

When man makes a fire, he must gather firewood of pine. When it rains, the slate has been moistened beforehand.<sup>6</sup> The governor renounced the world after seeing the crow's wicked deed. It is the Buddha's work to lead man to enlightenment by showing him the reality of suffering, which is the reality of living beings in the world of desire.<sup>7</sup> Those who do not like this reality renounce such a world, while those who are foolish indulge in it. The note says how praiseworthy it was for Mr. Chinu no agatanushi, who saw the wickedness of a crow, to avoid worldly filth and the transience of fleeting flow-ers; to purify himself, devote himself to practicing good, and pray for wisdom; and to look forward to birth in the pure land, liberated from this world. He excelled particularly in his wish for liberation from this world.

## 3

### *On the Death Penalty in This Life of an Evil Son Who Tried to Kill His Mother out of Love for His Wife<sup>1</sup>*

Kishi no Ōmaro 吉志大麻呂<sup>2</sup> came from the village of Kamo, Tama district, Musashi province 武藏國多摩郡鴨里.<sup>3</sup> Ōmaro's mother was

5. For the significance of this episode, see Chap. II(2)b.

6. In some localities in Japan there is a proverb: When the surface of the rock gets moist with dew, it will rain without fail. This may well refer to the rain-making ceremony in which water is poured on the sacred stone to induce a rainfall.

7. 欲界 *yakukai* (Skt. *kāmadhātu*); the sphere of desire, one of the three spheres of the world, which includes the six lowest heavens and five other ways of existence, that is, man, *asura*, animal, hungry fiend, and hell.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XX, 33), *Zōhōzō-kyō*, IX (*Taishō*, IV, 492), *Hōon jurin*, XXII (*Taishō*, LIII, 448).

2. Or Kishi no Homaro 吉志火磨; life unknown, but the *Shōshōin monjo* 正倉院文書 gives his name.

3. The village is unidentified. Tama is in Greater Tokyo.



efforts to pull him up by the hair, he fell down. The merciful mother brought his hair back home to hold funeral rites and put it in a box in front of a Buddha image, asking monks to chant scriptures.<sup>10</sup>

How great was the mother's compassion! So much that she loved an evil son and practiced good on his behalf. Indeed, we know that an unfilial sin is punished immediately and that an evil deed never goes without a penalty.

## 4

### *On a Contest Between Women of Extraordinary Strength*<sup>1</sup>

In the reign of Emperor Shōmu there was a woman of extraordinary strength in Ogawa Market, Katakata district, Mino province 三野國片縣郡小川市.<sup>2</sup> She was large, and her name was Mino no kitsune 三野狐<sup>3</sup> (the fourth generation of the one whose mother was Mino no kitsune). Her strength equaled that of one hundred men. Living within the marketplace of Ogawa and taking pride in her strength, she used to rob passing merchants of their goods by force.

At that time there was another woman of great strength in the village of Katawa, Aichi district, Owari province 尾張國愛智郡片輪里.<sup>4</sup> She was small (a granddaughter of the Venerable Dōjō who once lived at Gangō-ji).<sup>5</sup> As she heard that Mino no kitsune robbed passersby of their goods, she sought to challenge her by loading two hundred and fifty bushels<sup>6</sup> of clams on a boat, and anchoring next to the market. In addition, she prepared and loaded on a boat twenty pliable vine whips.

Kitsune came to the boat, seized all the clams, and had them sold. "Where did you come from?" she asked the owner of the clams, but she got no reply. She repeated the question, but again got no answer. After Kitsune had repeated the same question four times, the owner answered, "I don't know where I came from." Kitsune, insulted, rose

10. See Chap. II(2)b, for the significance of this story.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XXIII, 17). This is a part of the Venerable Dōjō cycle (see I.2, 3; II.27). See above, Chap. II(2)b, for the significance of women who inherited extraordinary strength.

2. According to Takeda, it is the market located at present Gifu-shi 岐阜市.

3. See I.2.

4. See I.2, n. 9.

5. See I.3, n. 3.

6. In Japanese measurement, fifty *koku* 斛 (石). One *koku* is ten to 斗, and one hundred *shō* 升.

Kusakabe no Matoji 日下部眞吉.<sup>4</sup> In the reign of Emperor Shōmu he was appointed a frontier soldier<sup>5</sup> at Tsukushi 筑紫 by Ōtomo 大伴 (his name is unknown)<sup>7</sup> and had to spend three years there. His mother accompanied him and lived with him, while his wife stayed behind to take care of the house.

Ōmaro, out of love for his wife who had been left behind, thought up the wicked idea of killing his mother and returning home to his wife, claiming exemption from duty on the pretext of mourning.<sup>8</sup> As his mother's mind was set on doing good, he said to her, "There will be a great meeting for a week's lecture on the *Hoke-kyō* 法華經 in the eastern mountain. Shall we go to hear the teaching?"

His mother, deceived, was eager to go, and, devoutly purifying herself in a hot bath, accompanied her son to the mountain. Then he looked at her fiercely, as though with the eyes of a bull, and said, "You, kneel down on the ground!" Gazing at his face, she said, "Why are you talking like that? Are you possessed by a fiend?" The son, however, drew a sword to kill her. Kneeling down in front of her son, she said to him, "We plant a tree in order to get its fruit and to take shelter in its shade."<sup>9</sup> We bring up children in order to get their help and to depend on them. What on earth has driven you so crazy! I feel as though the tree I have been depending on has suddenly ceased to protect me from the rain." He would not listen to her, so she sorrowfully took off her clothes, put them in three piles, knelt down, and told him her last wish: "Will you wrap up these clothes for me? One pile goes to you, my eldest son, one to my second son, and one to my third son."

When the wicked son stepped forward to cut off his mother's head, the earth opened to swallow him. At that moment his mother grabbed her falling son by the hair and appealed to Heaven, wailing, "My child is possessed by some spirit and driven to such an evil deed. He is out of his mind. I beseech you to forgive his sin." In spite of all her

4. Kusakabe is a family name (see I.18, n. 7), and Matoji is a given name which originated in the common noun, meaning "legal wife."

5. 前守 (崎守, 防人) *sakimori*; soldiers sent to Tsukushi (present-day Kyūshū) to defend the country from a possible invasion by foreign troops from Korea or China. They had three years' duty there and were not allowed to bring any family member. See *Ryō no gige*, "Gunbō-ryō," Articles 8, 27.

6. The Ōtomos were traditionally in charge of military matters and served the emperors as imperial guards. Cf. *Nihon shoki*, *Kojiki*, etc.

7. The compiler's note.

8. The mourning period for parents was one year, during which people were exempted from any labor duties. (See *Ryō no gige*, "Fueki-ryō," Article 21). However, "Gunbō-ryō," Article 28, prescribes that the mourning period should be observed after soldiers have fulfilled their tour of duty.

9. *Daihatsu nehan-gyō*, XXI (*Taishō*, XII, 493). 如人種樹 爲得蔭涼 爲得花果 及以材木.